

Workplace Policy Regarding Domestic and Sexual Violence: Options for Vermont Employers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. RATIONALE	1
III. DEFINITIONS	2
IV. RESOURCES	3
V. ABBREVIATED DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY	4
VI. COMPREHENSIVE DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY	5

I. INTRODUCTION

This document is meant to support Vermont employers in adopting a Domestic and Sexual Violence Policy. You will find two sample policies, one an abbreviated version that addresses basic workplace concerns, the other a model comprehensive policy. You could choose to adopt one of these or to use them as a starting point from which to create your own. There is also a list of important resources and a definition of terms.

These materials were assembled by the Domestic Violence and the Workplace committee of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence for inclusion in the report by Michele C. Schmidt and Autumn Barnett (2011), ***How Does Domestic Violence Affect the Vermont Workplace? A survey of male offenders enrolled in batterer intervention programs in Vermont***, available for downloading as a PDF at http://www.uvm.edu/crs/reports/2011/VT_DV_Workplace_Study_2011.pdf.

While the report focused on the particular effects of *domestic* violence on the workplace, the model policies include *domestic and sexual violence*, and cover employer responses to both survivors and offenders. The appropriate responses and protections for survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence are parallel to those for sexual violence so one policy will address both concerns.

Historically, workplace policies in this arena have focused solely on the effects of sexual *harassment* in the workplace. These sexual harassment policies are important but do not adequately address domestic or sexual violence concerns that may impact the workplace. A Domestic and Sexual Violence Policy is distinct from your Sexual Harassment Policy, and both are important.

II. RATIONALE

Adopting a Domestic and Sexual Violence Policy will promote the health and safety of all your employees. A Domestic and Sexual Violence Policy will heighten awareness of domestic and sexual violence and provide guidance for employees and management in addressing the occurrence of domestic and sexual violence and their effects in the workplace.

Domestic and sexual violence are very serious issues in the state of Vermont and across the nation. At least one out of every three women and one of every six men will experience domestic or sexual violence at some point in their lives. This violence and its effects are not contained within the home. We know that at least one third of male perpetrators of domestic violence in Vermont used workplace resources to be abusive and that one out of two perpetrators said that their work performance was negatively affected because of their behavior. It is clear that the workplace is affected by domestic and sexual violence.

Employers who adopt a Domestic and Sexual Violence Policy play a key role in supporting victims, holding perpetrators accountable, and preventing further incidents of violence, ultimately creating a more productive workplace and a safer community.

III. DEFINITIONS

The first step in developing your workplace policy is to provide clear definitions.

Domestic Violence: A pattern of coercive behavior used by one person to gain power and control over another. Domestic Violence may include physical violence, sexual, emotional, and psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, stalking and economic control. Although men can be victims of domestic violence, it is a major cause of injury or death to women. Domestic Violence occurs between people of all racial, economic, educational and religious backgrounds, in heterosexual and same sex relationships, and between people living together or separately, married or unmarried, and in short-term or long-term relationships. Domestic Violence is legally defined in Vermont as occurring between family members or persons who, for any length of time, are living or have lived together as sexual partners or as roommates, are having or have had a sexual relationship, and adults or minors who are dating or have dated.

Sexual Violence: A continuum of non-consensual sexual contact ranging from sexual harassment to sexual assault. Some or all of these acts may also be addressed in the Sexual Harassment Policy. Sexual violence is any sexual act or behavior that is perpetrated against someone's will when someone does not or cannot consent. Victims of sexual violence may know the perpetrator(s), such as a coworker, supervisor, client or vendor, and/or may be involved in a dating or marital relationship with the perpetrator, or the perpetrator may be unknown to the victim. A person of any age or gender may be a victim of sexual violence. Consent is not given when a perpetrator uses force, harassment, threat of force, threat of adverse personnel action, coercion, or when the victim is asleep, incapacitated, or unconscious.

Batterer, Abuser, Offender or Perpetrator: The individual who commits an act of domestic or sexual violence as defined above.

Survivor or Victim: The individual who has been or is currently the subject of domestic or sexual violence.

Safety Plan: A course of action and precautions that help the victim maintain safety at work and/or home.

Protection Order: Vermont statutes provide for three types of protection orders:

The Vermont Abuse Prevention Statute (15 V.S.A. Sec. 1101-1115) provides a mechanism for a **victim of abuse to apply for a protection order from the Family Division of the Superior Court called a Relief from Abuse Order**. The order restrains an abuser from abusing the victim, prohibits violent or threatening acts and/or harassment, and/or contact or communication with or physical proximity to another person. The order also addresses possession of the residence and custody of children. A protection order from another state or territory shall be accorded full faith and credit throughout Vermont and shall be enforced as if it were an order of this state.

Title 12 (chapter 178) of the Vermont statutes provides a mechanism for **victims of stalking and sexual assault to apply for protection orders (also called SSA orders)** when the perpetrator is not a family or household member. The process for obtaining an Order Against Stalking or Sexual Assault is similar to that for obtaining a Relief From Abuse order, except that SSA orders are obtained through the Civil Division of Superior Court and are only available during business hours. The court can issue temporary and final orders that demand that the defendant stay away from the plaintiff and her or his children.

Title 33 (33 V.S.A §6933) of the Vermont statutes provides a mechanism for **vulnerable adults to apply for protection orders** if they have suffered abuse (including sexual abuse), neglect, or exploitation by a household member, caregiver or anyone else. The vulnerable adult may file a petition requesting that the defendant refrain from abusing, neglecting or exploiting the vulnerable adult and/or that they immediately vacate the household.

All of these protection orders are enforceable by law enforcement officers, and violation of an order is a criminal act punishable by law.

Certified Batterer Intervention Program: a program certified by the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence and designed to provide education and increase motivation in program participants to end their abuse and engage in a process of behavior change.

IV. RESOURCES

It is essential that a workplace policy contain up-to-date resource and contact information.

VERMONT RESOURCES:

Vermont Domestic Violence Hotline call 1-800-228-7395

Vermont Sexual Violence Hotline call 1-800-489-7273

United Way Information and Referral dial 211

Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence <http://www.vtnetwork.org> or (802) 223-1302

Vermont Commission on Women See the On-Line Resource Guide at <http://www.women.vermont.gov/> or call (800) 881-1561

Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services <http://www.ccvvs.state.vt.us/> or (802) 241-1250

Vermont Safe At Home Program <http://www.sec.state.vt.us/otherprg/safeathome/safeathome.html/> (802) 828-0586 or (800) 439-8683 (toll free in Vermont only)

Vermont Department of Labor <http://www.labor.vermont.gov> or (802) 828-4000

The Vermont Dept. of Labor coordinates the Survivor Transitional Employment Benefit Program

Vermont Attorney General's Office <http://www.atg.state.vt.us/issues/criminal-law/domestic-violence.php> or (802) 828-5520

NATIONAL RESOURCES:

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

National Sexual Violence Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

RESOURCES SPECIFIC TO EMPLOYMENT:

Workplaces Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence: A National Resource Center

<http://www.workplacesrespond.org/>

Futures Without Violence <http://endabuse.org/> or (415) 252-8900

Peace at Work <http://www.peaceatwork.org> or (919) 274-5515

Safe at Work Coalition <http://www.safeatworkcoalition.org>

Liz Claiborne Love is Not Abuse Initiative <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com>

V. ABBREVIATED DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY

A. Response to Employees who are Victims of Domestic or Sexual Violence

Employees at *(Business Name)* should not be disciplined or discriminated against in hiring, firing, staffing, or other terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because of being a victim of domestic violence.

(Business Name) acknowledges that victimization can lead to absences, late arrival/early departure, or decreased productivity. These employment issues may be a result of legal obligations, medical needs, safety planning and trauma. Reasonable accommodations will be given to the victim before imposing any employee disciplinary action.

(Business Name) encourages victims and other affected employees to contact community agencies (listed below) for resources and referrals. Many provide free services for safety planning, accessing protection orders, counseling, support groups, shelter, advice and legal assistance.

(Business Name) will attempt to make available appropriate information, referrals, and resources to victims and other employees.

(Business Name) will provide support through referrals to community agencies, our *Employee Assistance Program*, and our Security and Human Resources personnel. We encourage all employees to take advantage of these resources. You may contact these resources available twenty-four (24) hours a day and seven (7) days a week:

- **Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, visit <http://www.vtnetwork.org>**
- **Vermont Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-228-7395**
- **Vermont Sexual Violence Hotline at 1-800-489-7273**
- **United Way Information and Referral, dial 211**

You may also contact our Employee Assistance Program _____, Security Office: _____, and Human Resources: _____.

B. Response to Employees who Commit Acts or Threats of Domestic or Sexual Violence

Any employee who commits acts/threats of domestic or sexual violence at the workplace or while using workplace resources, will be subject to disciplinary action which may include but is not limited to dismissal. If appropriate, law enforcement will be contacted, which may result in arrest, criminal charges and/or prosecution. Workplace resources include, but are not limited to, phones, fax machines, e-mail, mail, automobiles, pagers, office supplies, photocopy machines and work time.

If an employee intentionally uses their position or workplace resources to enable a perpetrator to harm/contact a victim, both the employee and perpetrator (if an employee) will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include but is not limited to dismissal. If appropriate, law enforcement will be contacted, which may result in arrest, criminal charges, and/or prosecution.

(Business Name) recognizes that perpetrators also need assistance and resources. We will provide, when appropriate, referrals to community agencies, our Employee Assistance Program at _____, certified Batterer Intervention and/or Sex Offender Treatment Programs. We encourage all employees to take advantage of these resources. To find a Batterer Intervention Program in your area call (802) 223-1302 or visit <http://www.vtnetwork.org>. To find a Sex Offender Treatment Program in your area call (802) 247-3132 or (503) 643-1023 or visit <http://www.atsa.com/request-referral>.

C. Law Enforcement and Laws

(Business Name) will cooperate to the fullest extent legally possible with law enforcement and other appropriate government agencies. In addition, this policy shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with all applicable local, state or federal laws.

4. When responding to an employee's experience of domestic or sexual violence, there may be rare situations where the employer would want to review documents relating to the violence and the employer could look to the types of documentation listed below. Supervisors are advised, however, that due to the emergency nature of some of these requests, the employee may in some circumstances not be able to provide such documentation:

- A Protection Order, criminal charge paperwork or conviction record;
- Other court records such as divorce or family court proceedings;
- Child custody paperwork;
- Police reports;
- Signed affidavits regarding the abuse;
- State Agency records; or
- Medical documentation.

To the extent possible, all documentation submitted shall be handled in a secure and confidential manner so as to respect the employee's right to privacy.

D. Procedures for Employees with Performance Issues Related to Domestic or Sexual Violence

1. Although (*Business Name*) retains the right to discipline employees for cause, (*Business Name*) acknowledges that victimization can lead to absences, late arrival/early departure, or decreased productivity. These employment issues may be a result of legal obligations, medical needs, safety planning and trauma. When an employee who is subject to discipline confides that the job performance or conduct problem is caused by domestic or sexual violence, reasonable accommodations should be given to the victim before imposing any employee disciplinary action.

2. (*Business Name*) should offer the employee a referral for appropriate assistance (e.g., the Employee Assistance Program or EAP at _____ and/or the local domestic violence service programs at 1-800-228-7395 or sexual violence service programs at 1-800-489-7273 as part of the performance assessment.

3. The manager/supervisor, in collaboration with the employee and personnel and human resource departments, should allow a reasonable amount of time for the employee to obtain assistance for the domestic or sexual violence.

E. Disciplinary Procedures for Employees Who Commit Acts or Threats of Domestic or Sexual Violence

1. (*Business Name*) is committed to providing a workplace in which the occurrence of domestic or sexual violence will not be tolerated. Any physical assault or threat made by an employee while on premises, (*Business Name*) during working hours, or at a (*Business Name*) sponsored social event is a serious violation of this policy and is potentially subject to criminal prosecution. This policy not only applies to acts against other employees, but to acts against all other persons, including intimate partners. Employees found to have violated this policy may be subject to corrective or disciplinary action up to and including discharge and subject to being reported to appropriate law enforcement and to criminal prosecution.

2. Employees convicted of a crime as a result of domestic or sexual violence may be subject to corrective or disciplinary action (such as transfer), up to and including discharge, when such action affects the work performance of the convicted employee or affects the normal operations of (*Business Name*).

F. Guidelines Regarding Assistance for Victims and Perpetrators

a. General Guidelines for Employers

(Business Name) seeks to create a supportive workplace environment in which employees feel comfortable discussing domestic and sexual violence and seeking assistance for domestic or sexual violence concerns. The following information is provided to help employees assist co-workers who are victims of domestic or sexual violence to obtain services and to enhance the safety of workplaces *(Business Name)*.

1. Recognizing that services and support for victims of domestic and sexual violence are limited and that victims may face threats of further violence or death if they attempt to leave a violent situation, managers/supervisors should seek to provide a non-judgmental and supportive environment for the employee. Managers/supervisors should respect the victim's need to be self-directing and maintain the strictest confidentiality.

2. A successful workplace intervention may consist of providing the employee with a non-judgmental place to discuss the violence and information to begin accessing resources in the community, or assisting the employee to formulate a safety plan for the work environment.

3. If an employee discloses that she or he is a victim of domestic or sexual violence, it is important to send the following messages so that you never blame the victim for the violent acts of the perpetrator:

- You do not deserve to be treated this way.
- You are not to blame.
- You are not alone.
- There is help available.

4. If a manager/supervisor believes an employee is being abused but has not disclosed this to her or his manager/supervisor, the manager/supervisor should address any job performance issues and provide the employee with information regarding the *EAP* and local domestic and sexual violence programs and/or other community resources.

5. It is important that all employees know how to best respond to the effects of domestic and sexual violence in the workplace. The following clarifies roles for all staff:

b. Managers/Supervisors:

1. Will be required to participate in basic domestic and sexual violence training provided by *(Business Name)* in consultation with the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

2. Should establish a relationship with Domestic and Sexual Violence and Batterers Intervention programs in the community to share information and resources including: asking the programs to provide training and other educational events; working together to create informational materials, etc.

3. Should inform and update supervised personnel on a periodic basis about *(Business Name's)* policy and procedures on encouraging work environments free from violence, threats and harassment.

4. Should post information about domestic and sexual violence in the manager/supervisor's work area and also have information available where employees can obtain it without requesting it or being seen getting it. Information should have tear-off strips with contact information about domestic and sexual violence services available. Some suggestions are: restrooms, lunchrooms, health or first aid offices, or where other employee information is available.

5. Should be responsive when an employee who is either the victim or the perpetrator of domestic or sexual violence asks for help and assist the employee to contact EAP, local domestic/sexual violence or batterers' intervention programs.
6. Should be aware of physical or behavioral changes in the employees and consult with *EAP* and the local domestic or sexual violence program for advice. **The manager/supervisor's role is not to diagnose or counsel the employee, but to refer the employee to appropriate resources.** The following behaviors may be associated with domestic or sexual violence: absenteeism, late arrival/early departure, decreased productivity, inappropriate/excessive clothing, obsession with time, repeated physical injuries, chronic health problems (for example chronic pain), isolation, emotional distress, depression, distraction and excessive number of personal phone calls, texts or other personal communication (which may be generated by the perpetrator).
7. Must be respectful of the employee's personal choices. If the manager/supervisor observes signs of violence, it is appropriate to convey concern and to provide the employee information about available resources. It is critical that the manager/supervisor respect the employee's privacy and not pressure the employee to disclose any personal information.
8. Should work with the victim, the Personnel Department, human resources, EAP and/or the local domestic and sexual violence programs as necessary to assist the victim to develop a workplace safety plan and make reasonable accommodations according to that plan. When assisting an employee to develop a workplace safety plan, the manager/supervisor should ask what changes, if any, could be made at the workplace to make the employee feel safer. Victims of domestic and sexual violence know their abusers better than anyone else, and victims of domestic and sexual violence are the primary experts in what they need in order to achieve safety and healing. When it comes to their safety, survivors must determine the most effective way to stay safe and managers/supervisors can assist them in developing this safety plan. In addition, if it is determined that other employees or members of the public are at risk, it is essential to take measures to protect them.
9. Respect the employee's boundaries and privacy, even if the employee/manager disagrees with the decisions the employee makes. A victim of domestic or sexual violence may need to make numerous attempts to leave the abuser before being able to do so. It is often difficult to leave because of factors like financial and childcare responsibilities, or threats of violence. Victims of sexual violence may cope with the effects of trauma in ways that seem counterintuitive to observers, but that are in fact natural reactions to traumatic experiences. Victims should be supported and referred to appropriate resources.
10. Shall maintain the confidentiality of employees experiencing domestic or sexual violence and any other referrals under this policy to the extent permitted by law; and inform other employees of the domestic or sexual violence circumstances on a need to know basis only. Whenever possible, the manager/supervisor should give advance notice to the employee who is experiencing domestic or sexual violence of the manager/supervisor's need to inform others.
11. If necessary and when possible, should try to adjust the employee's work schedule and/or grant leave if the employee needs time off for medical assistance, legal assistance, court appearances, counseling, relocation, or to make other necessary arrangements to enhance her or his safety. This approved leave should not impact performance evaluation or promotion.
12. Should review the safety of parking arrangements and available phone protections. The manager/supervisor or the building safety committee should make sure that the parking areas are well-lit and provide escorts (i.e., manager/supervisors, security or fellow employees) to parked cars and priority parking near the building entrance for employees who fear for their safety at work. The same parties should consider protective measures to reduce the possibility of harassment through phone or email.
13. Maintain communications as much as possible with the employee during any absence and **preserve the confidentiality** of the employee's whereabouts. Managers should recognize that an employee may be residing at a safe house or shelter and may have difficulties maintaining this communication.

14. Work with Human Resources and/or the Department of Personnel to relocate an employee to an alternate worksite, whenever feasible, if the employee requests to relocate for safety reasons, or transfer the perpetrator if the employee or a court order requests this action. A transfer of the perpetrator should only be undertaken in consultation with the employee experiencing domestic or sexual violence, since this sort of action can in some circumstances result in retaliation and decreased safety for the victim.

15. Cooperate with local law enforcement personnel regarding the service of an employee with a Protection Order.

16. Comply with all Protection Orders. If both the plaintiff and defendant in a protection order proceeding are (*Business Name*) employees, the manager/supervisor should work with the Personnel Department and/or human resources to consider relocating the defendant to a work location in which defendant will have no contact with plaintiff. If violations of an order are observed, the manager/supervisor should document these violations, notify the victim and call the police if appropriate.

17. After consultation with Department of Personnel, Human resources, and legal counsel, take any appropriate corrective or disciplinary action consistent with policy, procedure and/or collective bargaining agreements, up to and including termination, against any employee who commits acts of domestic or sexual violence at any (*Business Name*) worksite, or who is convicted of a crime as a result of domestic or sexual violence when such action affects the work performance of the convicted employee, affects the safety of other employees or affects the normal operations of (*Business Name*).

18. Some sources of potential information for managers and supervisors regarding pending criminal matters include the local Department of Probation or Parole and the Criminal Division of Superior Court regarding pending matters, conditions of release or convictions.

c. Options for Employees Who are Victims of Domestic or Sexual Violence

1. Call the local police if you are in immediate danger.

2. Call your local domestic violence program (1-800-ABUSE95 or 802-228-7395) or sexual violence program (1-800-489-7273) to discuss your options. They assist victims of domestic and sexual violence while maintaining anonymity and providing information confidentially.

3. Talk with a trusted colleague, manager/supervisor, or union representative about your situation.

4. Contact the EAP office at _____.

5. Work with your manager/supervisor, the Department of Personnel or Human Resources, your EAP representative, local domestic or sexual violence programs, and/or others to develop a safety plan.

6. Notify your supervisor of the possible need to be away from work and find out your leave options. Be clear about when you plan to return to work and maintain communication with your supervisor during your absence. If necessary and available, make alternate arrangements for receiving your paycheck.

7. If you are concerned about your safety at work, submit a recent photograph of the perpetrator and/or vehicle, a copy of any Protection Order, any other relevant court orders, and other identifying information for the perpetrator, such as car type and make, car color and license number to your supervisor and the police. This information assists your employer in identifying the perpetrator if he or she appears in the workplace.

8. Obtain assistance for and documentation of the violence (including old injuries) from your primary care provider or other medical providers.

9. Consider whether you need the services of the Secretary of State's Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program which provides victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking with a

substitute mailing address so they can relocate to a safe place unknown to their abusers. Contact this program at safeathome@sec.state.vt.us or (802) 828-0586.

d. Options for Employees Who Are Perpetrators of Domestic or Sexual Violence

1. Contact the EAP office at _____.
2. Find a Certified Batterer's Intervention Program by contacting the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence for a current list, at <http://www.vtnetwork.org> or (802) 223-1302.
3. Contact the Association of Treatment for Sexual Abusers (503-643-1023 or <http://www.atsa.com/request-referral>) or the Safer Society (802-247-3132) to find a program near you.

e. Options for Other Employees Who Have Concerns about Domestic or Sexual Violence

1. If you know or believe that a colleague is a victim of domestic or sexual violence, **communicate your concerns** for her/his safety to the colleague. Tell your colleague that you appreciate her/his confiding in you. Say that you are sorry it is happening and you can never say the following too often:

- It is not your fault. You do not deserve to be treated this way.
- You are not alone and I am glad you told me about what you are going through.
- I am here for you and help is available in the workplace and at home.

Your colleague needs **support and validation, not judgment**. Leaving an abuser is only possible when the victim believes it is safe to do so. Recovering from domestic or sexual violence can take a very long time and may require a lot of support, from the workplace and many other resources.

2. Be clear that your role is to support and help, not to judge. It takes a long time to get over being victimized, especially by someone you love. If your colleague is experiencing **domestic violence**, tell them that getting free is not easy but help is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from the **local domestic programs at 1-800-ABUSE95 (802-228-7395) or the EAP office at _____**. If your colleague is experiencing **sexual violence**, tell them that they are not alone and that help is available 24/7, every day, from **local sexual violence programs by calling 1-800-489-7273 or the EAP office at _____**. Tell your colleague that they can speak to someone anonymously and confidentially at these numbers. Maintain the confidentiality of your colleague's circumstances and do not reveal any other referrals under this policy to the extent permitted by law. If the victim gives you permission, discuss their situation with the EAP counselors, the Department of Personnel or Human Resources, or a local domestic or sexual violence program for further guidance.

3. Report any threats of violence you experience or witness to your manager/supervisor, site security personnel, the police, personnel, EAP, and/or human resources.

4. Educate yourself regarding domestic and sexual violence. Check your local library or your local domestic and sexual violence programs regarding books, videos and other materials. Several websites also contain good information about sexual and domestic violence: <http://www.vtnetwork.org>, <http://www.RAINN.org>, <http://www.nsvrc.org>, <http://www.nnedv.org>, <http://www.workplacesrespond.org>.

5. Volunteer at a local domestic or sexual violence program or organize a workplace drive for financial support of domestic and sexual violence programs.

Sample Brochure for Employers

Please note that the following is a replica of a sample brochure and is not drawn to scale. A PDF of the original brochure may be downloaded from the Vermont Commission on Women's website at: <http://women.vermont.gov/sites/women/files/pdf/dvinwkpl2011.pdf>

Domestic Violence: A Workplace Issue

Costs to Your Business

Loss of productivity or work time, absenteeism, employee turnover and creating an actual or perceived unsafe or hostile work environment are common workplace impacts of domestic violence

In a 2011 Vermont study of domestic violence offenders:

- 75% said they had a hard time concentrating at work because of their relationship issues.
- 53% felt their job performance was negatively affected.
- 55% used a cell phone to threaten, control or abuse their partner during the work day.
- the 193 offenders surveyed reported a total of 58,591 days taken from work for domestic violence related circumstances.
- almost half of respondents reported that their partners took time off from work because of the domestic violence.
- those partners lost 1,110 days of paid and unpaid time off from work.
- 19% of respondents reported causing or almost causing an accident at work because they were distracted due to the domestic violence.

Nationally, domestic violence costs businesses nearly \$6 billion in healthcare expenses and lost productivity every year.

Employers have been held liable for failing to adequately address domestic violence in the workplace. Recent jury award to victims, coworkers and their estates ranged from \$25,000 to several million dollars.



Domestic Violence Doesn't Stay at Home When Victims Go to Work

Domestic violence occurs between people of all racial, economic, education and religious backgrounds; in heterosexual and same sex relationships; while living together or separately, married or unmarried; and in short or long-term relationships.

- In Vermont, at least 4 domestic violence related homicides have occurred in connection with the victim's employment.
- Nationally, 1 in 5 employed adults is the victim of domestic violence.
- 1 in 4 employees reports working with a co-worker who has been a victim of domestic violence.

- 74% of employed battered women say they are harassed by their partner at work.
- 94% of corporate security directors and 78% of human resource professionals consider domestic violence a critical workplace issue.
- 4 out of 5 employees believe workplaces can make a difference by addressing domestic violence in the workplace.
- In a 2011 study, over 75% of Vermont offenders surveyed felt workplace policies addressing domestic abuse would be an effective deterrent to further violence.

A Safe and Secure Workplace

Security measures can play a critical role in protecting all employees at work. Consider these changes to your workplace:

- Provide front desk or security staff copies of court orders and abuser's identifying information, including photographs and description of car, if available.
- Relocate employee to safer workplace or work station.
- Install buzzer system, panic button or other security devices.
- Limit access to building and if feasible, use one entrance.
- Provide escorts to employee's parked car.
- Install lighting in parking lots, additional fencing and cameras.
- Arrange priority parking spaces.
- Adopt phone security measures.
- Document harassing or abusive behavior.
- Assist in developing a safety plan course of action for employee. Call local domestic violence program for more information.
- Work with your security and/or local law enforcement to develop a response plan

Recommendations for All Vermont Employers

Employers can play an important role in providing clear guidelines and a supportive and productive workplace by implementing model practices and policies that respond to domestic violence:

Adopt: Adopt a policy addressing domestic violence in the workplace. Implement leave, benefit and referral initiatives. Samples can be found at the Vermont Attorney General's web site: www.atg.state.vt.us/issues/criminal-law/domestic-violence and the Vermont Commission on Women's web site: <http://women.vermont.gov/>.

Train: Trainings for managers and supervisors raise awareness and sensitivity and make the workplace safer and more productive. In a 2011 study, 92% of Vermont domestic violence offenders surveyed said that a private discussion with a supervisor would be an effective deterrent.

Educate: Educate staff through brown bag lunches, workshops, and newsletters. Post and distribute resource and referral information in areas of high visibility and on web pages. 73% of offenders in a Vermont survey said that posters and brochures in the workplace would help prevent abuse from impacting the business.

Consider Security: Review worksite security measures to protect all employees.

Connect: Connect with local domestic violence service programs. Contact the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence for more information: 802-223-1302 or vtnetwork.org.

Support: Perpetrators are solely responsible for domestic violence, but everyone can help support and protect survivors: join or donate to an organization working to prevent violence against women.

Be aware of state laws such as: the Survivor Transitional Employment Benefit Program at the Department of Labor at www.labor.vermont.gov; and statutory protections preventing discharge or discipline if an employee or their family are subpoenaed at 13 VSA Section 5313.

Resources

Local domestic violence programs provide: safety planning, help accessing protection orders, counseling, support groups, shelter, advice and legal assistance:

Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
www.vtnetwork.org / 802-223-1302

Find model workplace policies, trainings, and educational materials:

Vermont Attorney General's Office
atg.state.vt.us/issues/criminal-law/domesticviolence
/ 802-828-5520

Vermont Commission on Women
<http://women.vermont.gov/>

**Workplaces Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence:
A National Resource Center**
workplacesrespond.org

Love is Not Abuse
loveisnotabuse.com

Family Violence Prevention Fund
endabuse.org/section/programs/workplace

Peace at Work
peaceatwork.org

Safe at Work Coalition
safeatworkcoalition.org

State and national programs and organizations:

National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-SAFE

Vermont's Safe At Home Program
sec.state.vt.us/otherprg/safeathome/safeathome.html / 802-828-0586 / 800-439-8683 Vermont only

Vermont Domestic Violence Hotline
800-228-7395

Vermont Sexual Violence Hotline
800-489-7273

United Way Information and Referral
211

Vermont Commission on Women
women.vermont.gov / 800-881-1561

Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
ccvs.state.vt.us / 802-241-1250

Responding to Domestic Violence is Good Business

This brochure is a collaborative effort of Vermont's Attorney General's Office, Commission on Women, Council on Domestic Violence, and the Domestic Violence in the Workplace Council Workgroup.



Your local program: